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SUBJECT: RWANDA DEEPLY CONCERNED OVER DRC SUPPORT TO FDLR

Classified By: Ambassador Michael R. Arietti, reason 1.4 (B/D)

11. (C) Summary. Ambassador met with Great Lakes Special Envoy Ambassador Richard Sezibera October 31 to discuss the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Sezibera expressed great concern at the ascendancy of Rwandaphone extremists within the Kabila government, and the prospect for significant ethnic turmoil in north and south Kivu. Sezibera claimed DRC military commanders in the Kivus have been chosen who are close to the Democratic Force for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), and a "policy decision" has apparently been made by Kabila to assist those FDLR forces. An emboldened FDLR could attack Rwanda, forcing the Government of Rwanda (GOR) to respond. Sezibera considered the recent DRC plan for dealing with the FDLR to be of limited use, but said continuing dialogue with the DRC government was important. Peace in the Kivus required a disarmed and disbanded FDLR, a locally-controlled inter-ethnic dialogue, brassage of all remaining armed forces (including those of renegade general Nkunda), the monitored return of refugees, and restructured security forces. Sezibera also noted continued efforts to revive the Joint Verification Mechanism, and said USG observer status would be discussed at a November meeting of Rwandan and Congolese officials. He and other Rwanda officials fear their openness to cooperation on security issues is not being met with equal commitment by the Kabila government. End summary.

12. (C) Ambassador began his October 31 meeting with Great Lakes Special Envoy Ambassador Richard Sezibera by noting the tremendous policy focus in Washington in regard to security in the Kivus and Rwandan relations with the DRC. Ambassador advised Sezibera that AF Special Advisor Shortley was currently in North Kivu and would visit Rwanda next week, and that the US had decided to establish a full time presence in Goma. Recent meetings with President Kabila in Washington has gone well, he told Sezibera, and the USG welcomed both the DRC plan for dealing with the FDLR and the Rwandan response. Continuing dialogue between the two governments, with assistance from the USG and other partners, was key to ultimate resolution of the serious security situation in eastern Congo. Policy-makers in Washington recognized that while the DRC had decided to deal first with General Nkunda, the FDLR could not be allowed to "fester." The Ambassador assured Sezibera that all partners realized the importance of a concerted and comprehensive strategy for achieving peace in the DRC.

¶3. (C) Sezibera welcomed USG engagement, noted the importance of continued dialogue with the DRC, and offered his analysis of the security situation in the Kivus and efforts to improve it. First, he expressed grave reservations over the participation of what he termed "Rwandaphone extremists" at senior levels of the DRC government, including Kabila's cabinet. These men were giving Kabila skewed advice, he asserted, and it appeared that Kabila himself had made a "policy choice" to assist the FDLR. Rwandan intelligence showed a significant increase in DRC assistance to the FDLR, he said. Continuing, Sezibera stated one very worrying sign of DRC/FDLR collaboration was the appointment of DRC brigade commanders, in an "arc" along the Rwandan border, who had "links" to FDLR forces. These commanders and their colleagues at higher levels of the DRC military were both actively supplying arms to the FDLR and recruiting FDLR personnel into the DRC armed forces. After several years of cross-border peace, there had been this year two, albeit minor, FDLR attacks into Rwanda, he noted. A rearmed and emboldened FDLR would inevitably increase such attacks, forcing Rwanda to respond.

¶4. (C) Turning to the apparent DRC willingness to use force against tutsi General Nkunda, Sezibera said that his government foresaw two "bad outcomes:" 1) the DRC fails in its military push against Nkunda, weakening Kabila and emboldening extremists within the Kabila government, or; 2) the DRC defeats Nkunda, Rwandaphone extremists are increasingly ascendant in the Kivus, the FDLR is strengthened, and inter-ethnic violence soars. In essence, he said, a military result either way would lead to greater problems. However, Sezibera saw a remaining window of opportunity to avoid either extreme result.

¶5. (C) Against this backdrop of worsening security, Sezibera

characterized the DRC plan to address the FDLR problem as less helpful and less detailed than previous plans tendered by the DRC government. The voluntary "phase" of disarming and repatriating the FDLR was "not practical," he said, and the suggestion in the plan that FDLR personnel might be accorded some form of refugee status was "dangerous." He noted the DRC seemed to have the intention to revive the Sant Egidio process in some manner (in which the Catholic lay organization conducted extensive negotiations with FDLR leadership), but more talk with the FDLR was a prescription for delay and further deterioration of security in the Kivus.

¶6. (C) Sezibera then offered his view of what needed to be done to reach peace in the Kivus: 1) an FDLR "entirely out of the picture," disarmed, dispersed, and out of the DRC; 2) an inter-ethnic dialogue in the Kivus conducted under local auspices, as national authorities could not be trusted to deal in an even-handed fashion with all the ethnic groups found there; 3) a reorganized security force for the Kivus, armed with light weapons; 4) brassage of all remaining armed forces (after the FDLR was removed), including Nkunda's men; 5) monitored refugee returns.

¶7. (C) Turning finally to the Joint Verification Mechanism, Sezibera said a meeting in November was scheduled at the "political and technical" levels with DRC officials, which he would attend. Participation of observers, including USG personnel, would be discussed. One problem, he said, was his lack of any counterpart on the Congolese side -- he needed someone to speak to who had senior political authority. If the USG could assist with this, the JVM process would be able to make decisions and assign specific tasks.

¶8. (C) Comment. Sezibera's concern over collaboration between FDLR and DRC military commanders, and assistance to the FDLR by the DRC government, is only the latest in a series of increasingly worried approaches made to this embassy by Rwandan officials. While convinced of the necessity of reaching joint determinations with the DRC on security in the Kivus, they see their openness to cooperation being frustrated by a disorganized and divided Congolese

government. The Rwandans are deeply concerned that a newly-strengthened FDLR will conduct cross-border attacks, forcing a Rwandan response and creating a deteriorating security situation that will undermine prospects for continued economic growth and international investment in the region. The GOR welcomes the current enhanced USG focus on the eastern Congo, and is willing to collaborate with the GDRC, but is increasingly worried by what it sees as a disconnect between Kabila's rhetoric -- that he wants the FDLR out of the DRC -- and the active cooperation of the FARDC with the FDLR in the Kivus. End Comment.

ARIETTI